

The conquest of Khūzistān: a historiographical reassessment*

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In 1889 Ignazio Guidi edited an East Syrian chronicle that covers the late Sasanian and very early Islamic period.¹ Four years later Theodor Nöldeke translated the text into German, dated it to the late seventh century, and argued that its provenance was southern, rather than northern Iraq.² Nöldeke's arguments were accepted, and the text came to be called the *Khūzistān Chronicle*, which now seems to be the preferred designation in the secondary literature.³ Little more was said about the text until 1982,⁴ when Pierre Nautin argued more vigorously for an idea floating around since Nöldeke's day, *viz.* that the text consisted of two unequal parts, the second of which was made up of what Nöldeke called 'notes' (*Aufzeichnungen*).⁵ More specifically, Nautin proposed that at least two hands fashioned the work: first a chronicler, who he suggested was Elias of Merv (fl. 7th century);⁶ and second, at least one (and perhaps more) redactor/copyist(s), who added a grab-bag collection of material onto the chronicle, which had already lost its beginning; this collection Nautin called an 'appendix'.⁷ Now whether Elias is to be credited with the first,

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¹ 'Un nuovo testo siriaco sulla storia degli ultimi Sassanidi', *Actes du huitième Congrès international des Orientalistes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1891), Semitics Section, Part B, 1–36. All citations here are to Guidi's post-Nöldeke edition, *Chronicon anonymum*, in *Chronica Minora* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1903; *CSCO* 1–2, *Scr. syri* 1–2), I, 15–39 (Syriac text); II, 15–32 (Latin trans.).

² Theodor Nöldeke, 'Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik übersetzt und commentiert', *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-Hist. Classe, 128 (1893), 1–48.

³ It is also occasionally referred to as the 'Anonymous Nestorian Chronicle'; see Sebastian P. Brock, 'Syriac historical writing: a survey of the main sources', *Journal of the Iraqi Academy* (Syriac Corporation) 5 (1979–80), 25/302; *idem*, 'Syriac sources for seventh-century history', *BMGS* 2 (1976), 23–4; Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), index of sources, s.v. 'Khūzistān Chronicle'; Ignatius Ortíz de Urbina, *Patrologia syriaca* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965), 206–07; J.-B. Chabot, *Littérature syriaque* (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1934), 103; Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers, 1922), 207; Michael Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 563. The Haddad edition (noted by Brock, 'Syriac historical writing', 25/302) is unavailable to me, but none of the Ms. variants listed by Brock elsewhere ('Notes on some texts in the Mingana Collection', *JSS* 14 [1969], 221) improves on Guidi's (and Nöldeke's) readings.

⁴ With perhaps one exception: Fiey's tentative suggestion that either Daniel bar Mariam or Mīkhā of Bēt Garmē was 'la source ecclésiastique'. See Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Išō'yaw le Grand: vie du catholicos nestorien Išō'yaw III d'Adiabène (580–659)', *OCP* 36 (1970), 46 n. 3.

⁵ Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 2. He also speaks of 'der wenigstens zwei Generationen später schreibende Redactor' (*ibid.*, 20 n. 3).

⁶ On Elias, see Baumstark, *Literatur*, 208; Chabot, *Littérature*, 102.

⁷ Pierre Nautin, 'L'auteur de la "Chronique Anonyme de Guidi": Élie de Merw', *RHR* 199 (1982), 303–14.

chronicle, section of the work is not at all clear, but Nautin was certainly correct to emphasize the contrast between this part and what follows; if anything pulls the heterogeneous material together here, it is no longer chronology, but rather an enthusiasm for geography.⁸

For the date of the composition of the chronicle, Nautin argued for a *terminus ante quem* of 657 or 658, the date of Ḥishāyab III's death;⁹ he did not date the 'appendix', but much of the evidence cited by Nöldeke to date what he called a 'letzten Verfassers' would now apply, apparent allusions to the conquest of Africa and the failed siege of Constantinople taking us to c. 680.¹⁰ Nöldeke's argument naturally turns on his understanding of these allusions, and in fact there are grounds for arguing that Nautin's 'appendix' was compiled even earlier, perhaps very soon after the completion of the chronicle. For there are no unambiguous references to events in the 660s and 670s: thus, what Nöldeke took to be an allusion to the famous siege of Constantinople of the late 670s ('Over Constantinople He has not yet given them control') may rather allude to obscure events in the 650s.¹¹ But for our purposes it matters little if Nautin's 'appendix' had been compiled by 660, 670, or 680, and I shall stick with Nöldeke's more conservative dating.¹² The material may have been compiled earlier; there is no reason to think that it was compiled later.

In terms of form and provenance, the 'appendix' is composed of a series of discrete accounts, already written in character,¹³ and perhaps even more clearly than the chronicle, it reflects local knowledge. It is true that similarities to material that appears in Monophysite sources suggest that at least some of our text's information about Syria came from a Syrian-Byzantine milieu;¹⁴ but there is precious little of this, and what does come from the West is vague in the extreme: there is no doubt that Syria and Egypt were distant places. Here it is particularly important to note that unlike much of the later Christian tradition that betrays the influence of recognizably Islamic historiographical concerns,¹⁵ the 'appendix'—here like the chronicle—shows no reliance on the Islamic historical tradition. Entirely absent are features such as Arabic loan words (e.g. *rasūlā, fetnā*),¹⁶ *hijrī* dating,¹⁷ and interests that reflect a specifically Islamic *Sitz im Leben* (e.g. Arabian genealogy).¹⁸ Meanwhile, the names of

⁸ It includes, *inter alia*, an account of one of Elias' miracles, the foundation of several cities (see Nautin, 'L'auteur', 307–08), the conquest reports discussed here, Heraclius' death, and some Arabian topography.

⁹ Nautin, 'L'auteur', 311; Fiey (Iṣō'yaw le Grand) puts his death in the year 659.

¹⁰ 'Chronik', 2–3.

¹¹ As argued by Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a study of the use of non-Muslim sources for early Islamic history* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1996), 185 n. 41.

¹² The text's silence may suggest a date earlier than Nöldeke's; it may also reflect the compiler's project, since he makes no attempt to be thorough or comprehensive, and is apparently concerned to cobble together the stray piece of information that appeals to his interest in geography.

¹³ See Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 2.

¹⁴ See below, n. 205.

¹⁵ See, for example, Lawrence I. Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic historical tradition: some indications of intercultural transmission', *BF* 15 (1990), 1–44.

¹⁶ See the examples adduced in Andrew Palmer, *The seventh century in the West-Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 49 n. 162, 56 n. 173 (*rasūl*); and see also the *Zuqūq Chronicle*, IV, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot under the erroneous title of *Chronique de Deux de Tell Mahré, quatrième partie* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1895), AG 967 (*fetnā*).

¹⁷ Such as that in the (West Syrian) *Chronicle of 1234*; see Jean Maurice Fiey's introduction to the French translation of the second volume, *Auouymii auctoris chronicou ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, II (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1974; CSCO 354, Scr. syri 154), x; also in the East Syrian *Opus chronologicum* by Elijah of Nisibis (wr. 410/1019), ed. E. W. Brooks (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1910), 134, where Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (whose name is given in full) is said to have conquered Bēt Hūzayē in AH 22.

¹⁸ Such as we have in Theophanes (d. 818); noted by Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 144. The matter is discussed fully in Conrad, 'Theophanes', 11–16.

Abū Mūsā [al-Ash'arī], Khālid [ibn al-Walīd], and Sa'd ibn [Abī] Waqqāṣ appear in fragmentary form, the Persian general Hormizdān is called 'the Mede', and such details as do exist—particularly the names and offices of local church notables—are as hard to reconcile with Islamic historiographical concerns as they are natural in a local Nestorian Christian milieu.

It is in the midst of the broadly heterogeneous material in the 'appendix' that the reader comes across the subject of this article: a vivid and detailed account of the conquest of Bēt Hūzāyē (Ar. Khūzistān/al-Ahwāz). Although the *Khūzistān Chronicle* has been read several times with an eye towards discerning a Christian reaction to early Islam in general,¹⁹ it has not yet been brought to bear systematically on any of the vexing historical and historiographical problems that plague students of the conquests. Of course, Nöldeke did address some of these problems in his translation, but his *marginalia* are spotty and now show their age;²⁰ in any case, he apparently sought only to elucidate the recently available Syriac text. The source has also been put to use in a summary of the campaigns of Khālid ibn al-Walīd,²¹ but there its significance lay in its silence about Khālid's presence in Iraq, rather than in what it *does* say about the Muslim presence in Khūzistān. 'As far as the conquest is concerned, Islamicists from Wellhausen to Caetani to Donner have relied instead on the Arabic sources, and these being generally so intractable, and Islamicists generally so conservative, scholarship has hardly moved at all.'²² In fact, inasmuch as it has moved, our knowledge has contracted; and it is impossible to find fault with Donner's sensible view that we now must be content with 'a sequence of events and with the general understanding that the conquest of southern Iraq took place between AD 635 and 642. To seek greater chronological precision is to demand more of the sources than they can reasonably be expected to provide'.²³

To break the logjam we must leave the Islamic tradition. In what follows I shall do so, putting the long-neglected Syriac text to work by translating and commenting on its description of how several cities in Khūzistān fell to the Arabs.²⁴ My interests are primarily historiographical, and thoroughly conventional at that: I am concerned with the old-fashioned—if still unresolved—question of how faithfully our Islamic sources record conquest history. Of course it is impossible to know if the events described by our anonymous Syriac author actually took place as he describes them. We cannot pretend that literary representation, particularly of this variety, is a disinterested witness to events past,²⁵ and early sources are not necessarily more accurate than later

¹⁹ See, for example, Claude Cahen, 'Note sur l'accueil des chrétiens d'Orient à l'Islam', *RHR* 166 (1964), 51–3; Harold Suermann, 'Orientalische Christen und der Islam: christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632–750', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983), 130–31; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it*, 182–9. The work is curiously absent from M. Benedicte Landron, 'Les relations originelles entre chrétiens de l'Est (nestoriens) et musulmans', *PdO* 10 (1981–82), 191–222.

²⁰ For example, the material on the conquest of Khūzistān attributed to Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. 180/796), and preserved in al-Tabārī (wr. 303/915), was not yet available to Nöldeke.

²¹ See Patricia Crone, art. 'Khālid b. al-Walīd' in *EI*², IV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 961a.

²² Julius Wellhausen, 'Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams', in his *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, VI (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899), 95–6; Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905–26), III, 906–16; IV, 3, 454–74; Donner, *Conquests*, 212–17.

²³ Donner, *Conquests*, 217.

²⁴ The 'appendix' also has something to say about matters in Syria and Egypt, which I have translated in a brief appendix of my own; it follows below.

²⁵ The point hardly needs demonstration, but cf. John Wansbrough, *The sectarian milieu: content and composition of Islamic salvation history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 119: '...it ought to be clear that there can be no question of a neutral or "objective" source. Each witness, regardless of its confessional alignment, exhibits a similar, if not altogether identical, concern to understand the theodicy'.

ones.²⁶ But if we shall never know exactly what happened in Khūzistān in the 640s and 650s, our Syriac source preserves a very early understanding of what happened, and in so doing it provides an invaluable control for the later Islamic tradition. Early, naive, and historiographically independent of Islamic sources, it allows us to identify and occasionally disentangle strands of tradition that are manifestly late and polemically conditioned from other, older, strands that preserve authentically early views of conquest history.

The Syriac account

The relevant account may be translated as follows.²⁷ I have broken the text into paragraphs for the sake of clarity.

At the time of which we have been speaking (*beh dēn b-hanā zabnā d-men l'el emarnan*), when the Arabs (*tayyāyē*) conquered all the lands of the Persians and Byzantines,²⁸ they also entered and conquered all the fortified towns, that is, Bēt Lapāt (Ar. Jundaysābūr),²⁹ Karka d-Ledān,³⁰ and Shūshan, the citadel.³¹ There remained only Shūsh (Ar. al-Sūs) and Shūshtrā (Ar. Tustar), which were very strong, while of all the Persians none remained to resist the Arabs except king Yazdgard³² and one of his commanders (*had men rabbay haylawātēh*), whose name was Hormīzdān the Mede,³³ who gathered troops and held Shūsh and Shūshtrā. This Shūshtrā is very extensive and strong, because of the mighty rivers and canals that surround it on every side like moats. One of these was called Ardashīragān, after Ardashīr who dug it; another, which crossed it, was called Shamīrām, after the queen; and another, Dārāyagān, after Darius. The largest of all of them was a mighty torrent, which flowed down from the northern mountains.³⁴

²⁶ It is regrettable that this point is usually made apologetically, in defence of late evidence; see K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient conquest accounts: a study in ancient Near Eastern and biblical history writing* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 249–53.

²⁷ The passage begins on 35:20/29:30 and ends at 37:14/31:2.

²⁸ As Nöldeke remarked ('Chronik', 41 n. 4) this passage seems to allude to an earlier one, which begins on 30:23/26:13: 'Then God brought the sons of Ismail against them, [innumerable] like sand on the sea shore. Muhammad was their leader (*nulubhrānā*). Neither walls, gates, armor, or shields withstood them, and they took control over all of the land of the Persians. Yazdgard sent countless armies against them, but the Arabs (*tayyāyē*) defeated them all; they even killed Rustam. Yazdgard shut himself up inside the walls of Mahōzē (i.e. Seleucia-Ctesiphon), but eventually escaped by fleeing. He came to the lands of the Huzayē and of the Marōnayē. There he ended his life. The Arabs took control of Mahōzē and all of its lands. They also came to the Byzantine lands, and they plundered and ravaged all of the lands of Syria. Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, sent armies against them, but the Arabs killed more than 100,000 of them'.

²⁹ On Bēt Lapāt, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'L'Élam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales', *Méto* 5 (1969), 227–67; reprinted in *idem, Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London: Variorum, 1979), Chapter III.

³⁰ On Karka d-Ledān, see Fiey, 'L'Élam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales (suite)', *PdO* 1 (1970), 123–30; reprinted in his *Communautés*, Chapter IIb.

³¹ As Nöldeke comments ('Chronik', 42 n. 2), the phrase is biblical, but the author clearly does not have in mind Shūsh (Susa, al-Sūs), which presently follows.

³² i.e. Yazdagird III (r. 632–51).

³³ On the name, see Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1895), 10. The Arabic form preferred is generally al-Hurmuzān, with the important exception of Ibn A'tham (wr. 204/819–20), whose reading (H-r-m-z-d-ā-n) comes closest to the Syriac. On the date and transmission history of Ibn A'tham's history, several recensions of which have survived—at least in part—to modern times, see Lawrence I. Conrad, *Ibn A'tham and his history* (Winona Lake, IN: American Oriental Society, forthcoming).

³⁴ For a convenient discussion of the region's geography, see W. Barthold, *An historical geography of Iran*, trans. Svat Soucek, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Chapter 11.

Then (*haydēn*) an Arab commander known as³⁵ Abū Mūsā attacked Hormīzdān the Mede. He (Abū Mūsā) had built al-Baṣra as a settlement (*l-mawtābhōn*) for the Arabs, where the Tigris flows into the great ocean, between the cultivated land and the desert, just as Sa'īd bar Waqqāṣ had built the city of 'Aqūlā as another settlement for the Arabs, which was named Kūfa, after the bend of the Euphrates. But when Abū Mūsā went to attack Hormīzdān, this Hormīzdān devised stratagems in order to prevent them (the Arabs) from engaging him, until he gathered an army. He wrote to Abū Mūsā that he (Abū Mūsā) should stop taking captives and making war, and that he (Hormīzdān) would send him whatever tribute (*madattā*) they imposed on him. Thus it remained for two years.

Trusting his walls, Hormīzdān then broke the truce (*shaynā*) between them, and killed the men who had been ambassadors between them, one of whom was George, the bishop of Ulay.³⁶ He [also] imprisoned Abraham, the metropolitan of Furāt.³⁷ He [then] sent many armies against the Arabs, but they defeated them all. The Arabs rushed [forward], lay siege to Shūsh, took it after a few days, and killed all of the nobles (*prišē*) in it. They seized the house that is called the 'House of Mār Daniel', and took the treasure there enclosed, which had been kept there on the kings' orders since the days of Darius and Cyrus. They also broke open and made off with a silver coffin, in which a mummified corpse was laid; many said it was Daniel's, but others [claimed] that it was Darius.

They also lay siege to Shūshtrā, and fought for two years to take it. Then a man from Qatār³⁸ who was living there befriended a man who had a house on the walls, and the two of them conspired together. They went out to the Arabs and told them: 'If you give us a third of the spoil of the city, we will let you into it'. They came to an agreement, dug tunnels under the walls, and let in the Arabs, who [thus] captured Shūshtrā. They shed blood there as if it were water. They killed the exegete of the city and the bishop of Hormīzdardashīr (Ar. Sūq al-Ahwāz),³⁹ along with the students,⁴⁰ priests, and deacons, whose blood they shed in the holy sanctuary. They took Hormīzdān alive.

The passage translated appears to be a discrete unit. With a sure command of detail, and paced by a series of adverbs and adverbial phrases that link the episodes temporally and logically, the account generates a sense of movement that is almost entirely lacking in other parts of the 'appendix'. Elsewhere information is imparted: here a coherent story is told. Since our compiler generally shows little if any historical method,⁴¹ we can assume that the account came to him in this form; he copied it, just as he copied the chronicle before it. Its appeal presumably lay in the quality of its narrative, which vividly

³⁵ *Metknē*, usually merely 'nicknamed', but here it precisely expresses the Arabic *kunyā*.

³⁶ Apparently located south of al-Ḥīra; see Morony, *Iraq*, 152; Donner, *Conquests*, 329, n. 66.

³⁷ That is, Furāt d-Maysān, which was apparently located opposite the medieval site of al-Baṣra; see Morony, *Iraq*, 159.

³⁸ Nöldeke ('Chronik', 25, n. 2) points out that this was understood broadly: 'Qatār umfasst aber bei diesen Syrern alle Länder der nordöstlichen Arabiens, wo damals viele nestorjäische Christen wohnten'. The point, as I argue below, is Nestorian church politics.

³⁹ On Hormīzdardashīr, see Fiey, 'L'Élam... (suite)', 130–34.

⁴⁰ *Eskūlāye*; for the term, and a sense of school life, see *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*, ed. and trans. Arthur Vööbus (Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1962), esp. 79; J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 149–51.

⁴¹ It is particularly worth noting that no effort has been made to relate Khalīd's march to Syria, as portrayed in the 'appendix', to the chronicler's earlier allusion to al-Yarmūk (on which see below).

describes the terrible fate of a Nestorian heartland; it may also have appealed to the copyist's (or copyists') interest in geography and topography. Whatever its ultimate provenance, it is more detailed than anything available to Elias of Merv,⁴² or, for that matter, anything else to be written in either West or East Syriac.

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What the Syriac account cannot tell us

In what follows I shall argue that the 'appendix' to the *Khūzistān Chronicle* can provide enough corroboration for accounts in the Islamic tradition that we must posit the continuous transmission of historical material within the latter. In this case, some early material clearly did survive the hazardous passage from witness to tradent to historian, a passage of approximately 150–200 years. The degree to which those who initially transmitted and compiled the material were concerned with what we would consider historiographical issues—particularly problems of sequence and time—is considerably harder to discern, and although we shall meet these problems throughout, it is best if we address two at the start.

First, since our source begins with the entrance of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, it sheds no light on the events that the Islamic tradition describes as having taken place before his appearance in Khūzistān: of cities that are said to have entered into treaties, which they would soon break, and of 'Utba ibn Ghazwān and al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, the two commanders who are said to have preceded Abū Mūsā on the front, we hear nothing.⁴³ What our source does say, however, is that all but four of the 'fortified towns' had been taken *before* Abū Mūsā arrived on the scene; and thus there is probably something to the Islamic accounts that attribute some role to 'Utba and al-Mughīra.⁴⁴ Of course, whether Abū Mūsā's victories can be considered the last phase of a continuous series of campaigns that began with 'Utba is altogether a different question, and one that the source does not answer: the world of Medinan state building and caliphal politics is unknown to our Syriac source. Our Syriac compiler was apparently concerned only to record the outlines of the Sasanian defeat, rather than a detailed history of the Muslim victory; and even assuming that he had heard of such earlier battles as there were, we can hardly expect him to have connected them to those led by Abū Mūsā. He records what the Islamic tradition generally considers the final phase of the conquest of Khūzistān, probably for the simple reason that Abū Mūsā's campaigns were indeed decisive.

Although Syriac accounts can occasionally provide invaluable help in solving dating problems,⁴⁵ this one cannot; here we arrive at the second principal limitation of our source. An assortment of topics,⁴⁶ the 'appendix' can only yield a relative dating, and one that happens to be particularly weak to boot. The beginning of the passage suggests that the start of the conquest

⁴² Be that in the chronicle part of the work, following Nautin, or in the Christian Arabic *Chronicle of Seert*, following L. Sako, 'Les sources de la chronique de Séert', *PdO* 14 (1987), 159. On the disputed authorship of this work, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Ishō'dnah et *La chronique de Seert*', *PdO* 6–7 (1975–76), 447–59; and Nautin's riposte in 'L'auteur', 313–14.

⁴³ For summaries of these events, see the works cited above, n. 22.

⁴⁴ Here it is tempting to infer from the presence of the bishop of Hormizdardashīr in Tustar that his city had already fallen.

⁴⁵ Particularly for events in Syria and Palestine, where the Christian testimony is most dense; the earliest example is Theodor Nöldeke, 'Zur Geschichte der Araber im 1. Jahrhundert d.H. aus syrischen Quellen', *ZDMG* 29 (1875), 76–98.

⁴⁶ In Nautin's words ('L'auteur', 304), 'un appendice fait de morceaux décousus'.

of Khūzistān was roughly contemporaneous with, or perhaps even followed, that of Iraq and Syria: 'At the time of which we have been speaking, when the Arabs conquered all the lands of the Persians and Byzantines, they also entered and conquered all the fortified towns...'. But after recording Abū Mūsā's campaigns, it then turns to Khālid ibn al-Walīd's conquest of Syria, which it says *followed* those of Abū Mūsā: 'Afterwards (*bātarkēn*) a man from the Arabs named Kāled came and went to the West, and took the lands and towns as far as 'Arab'.⁴⁷ Now the problem can be solved by preferring the second of these two passages, which has the virtue of more clearly asserting a sequence of events; and since the remarks that follow seem to allude to the battle of al-Yarmūk,⁴⁸ we can actually generate a *terminus ante quem* of late August of 636/Rajab of AH 15 for the end of Abū Mūsā's campaigns.⁴⁹ That this dating is at severe variance with the consensus of the Islamic sources might cause some concern,⁵⁰ particularly because it would force a redating of the founding of al-Baṣra; but it is far from fatal, the Islamic tradition containing some aberrant dating schemes of its own. A report in the *Kitāb al-kharāj* of Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), for example, can be handled in such a way so as to produce the dating of c. AH 15 or 16 for the fall of Tustar.⁵¹

But there are too many problems to overcome. For one thing the sequence of conquests would run afoul of another, earlier, non-Islamic source.⁵² For another, it is not at all clear that the author of the passages translated above can also be credited with the passage translated below; and since the final redactor/editor manifests so little interest in chronology, we cannot use the latter to date material in the former without establishing single authorship. Moreover, even if we could establish a single author, his acquaintance with events in Syria pales in comparison with his knowledge of his (apparently) native Bēt Hūzāyē; and it would be nothing if not reckless to use his vague and secondhand material concerning the West to date his detailed account of local events. Finally, it may be that the crucial adverb (*bātarkēn*)—the hinge upon which the proposed dating would swing—has little temporal significance, and instead marks nothing more than a narrative transition.⁵³

⁴⁷ For the whole passage, see the Appendix below.

⁴⁸ Cf. Nöldeke, 'Geschichte', 79; Palmer, *Seventh century*, 3.

⁴⁹ According to the conventional interpretations of M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoires sur la conquête de la Syrie*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1900), 108–24; Donner, *Conquests*, 128–44; Palmer, *Seventh century*, 4.

⁵⁰ The earliest date for operations in Khūzistān seems to be the consensus report (*qālū*, 'they said') that begins al-Balādhurī's section on al-Ahwāz; but here it is al-Mughīra ibn Shū'ba who raids Sūq al-Ahwāz in late 15 or early 16/636 or 637; see al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Futūh al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866), 376. Khalifa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854), *Ta'rīkh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar (Damascus: Wizārat al-thaqāfa wa-l-siyāha wa-l-irshād al-qawmī, 1967), I, 105, puts this raid in AH 16. The latest date is in the severely telescoped account in al-Yāqūbī (d. 284/897), *Historiae*, ed. M. T. Houtsma (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1883), II, 180, where Abū Mūsā's conquest of al-Ahwāz and Iṣṭakhr is put in AH 23.

⁵¹ The report states that Abū Mūsā conquered Tustar, Isfahān, Mihrājanqadhaq, and Nihāwand (?) while Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās was laying siege to al-Madā'in; see Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-kharāj* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-salafiya, AH 1352), 60. The date for the final capitulation of al-Madā'in is usually given as 16/637; see al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879–1901), I, 2431–32. But its siege may have been very protracted; al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/891), *Al-Akhbār al-tiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Guirgass and Ignatius Kratchkovsky (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1888–1912), 133, puts it at 28 months. See also al-Balādhurī, *Futūh* 262–64; Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866–73), I, 768, which draws on al-Balādhurī, as well as on a chronology that dates the conquest to AH 15.

⁵² See ps.-Sebēos (wr. c. 660–70), *Histoire d'Héraclius*, trans. Frédéric Macler (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), 97–101.

⁵³ For parallels in the Arab-Islamic tradition, see Albrecht Noth, *The early Arabic historical tradition: a source-critical study*, 2nd ed. in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994; hereafter cited as Noth/Conrad), 173–77.

In sum, nothing in the 'appendix' can yield a precise date for the conquest of the south. Of course this can also be restated in more positive terms: nothing in the 'appendix' can throw serious doubt on a reconstruction that is based on a reading of the Islamic tradition, and that dates the fall of Khūzistān after that of al-Madā'in, perhaps in AH 22 or 23.⁵⁴

What the Syriac account can tell us

If the text cannot answer all of our questions, it can shed a direct and bright light on several others. It is to these questions that I shall now turn.

The conquest of Jundaysābūr

The first problem concerns the fall of Jundaysābūr. The sources familiar to al-Tabarī (wr. 303/915) and al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) held that the definitive conquest of Jundaysābūr followed that of Tustar and al-Sūs; this is the sequence that Donner describes.⁵⁵ But there were differing views: a tradition preserved by Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854), for example, holds that Jundaysābūr fell before Tustar,⁵⁶ and this is clearly what our Syriac authority has in mind as well. Considering that the conquest of Jundaysābūr does not seem to have been a principal concern for most of our Muslim authorities, and considering too that our Syriac source is not only local, but also that Jundaysābūr was the metropolitan centre of Nestorian Bēt Hūzāyē,⁵⁷ one might side with Khalīfa. In this case, as in others, consensus is apparently no guarantee of accuracy. Meanwhile, what the Syriac source has to say about the canal-dominated topography of Tustar is very much in line with how the city is described in many conquest accounts in the Islamic tradition.⁵⁸

The point to be emphasized here is a broader agreement between the Islamic tradition and our Syriac source: al-Sūs and Tustar were among the last cities to hold out in Khūzistān, falling definitively only after Abū Mūsā appeared on the scene, and al-Hurmuzān, sent by Yazdagird, played a crucial role in the Sasanian defence.

Al-Baṣra, al-Kūfa, and the problem of conquest participation

Our Syriac testimony on the founding of al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa is one of the earliest datable accounts we possess. It is both familiar (the two are established as 'settlements' for the Arabs) and unfamiliar (Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, rather than 'Utba ibn Ghazwān, being given credit for founding al-Baṣra).⁵⁹ Another,

⁵⁴ Cf. Donner, *Conquests*, 217.

⁵⁵ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2567; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 382; Donner, *Conquests*, 216.

⁵⁶ Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 138.

⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Fiey, 'L'Élam', 227–67.

⁵⁸ See, for example, al-Qummī (d. 805/1402), *Tārīkh-i Qummī*, ed. Jalīl al-Dīn Tīhrānī (Tehran: Maṭba'at-i Majlis, 1934), 297—this work is a Persian translation of an otherwise lost late tenth-century Arabic original; see A. K. S. Lambton, 'An account of the *Tārīkh-i Qummī*', *BSOAS* 12 (1947–48), 586–96. Al-Qummī credits his material to Ibn Ishaq (d. 151/761) and Abū 'Ubayda (d. 211/826), citing for the latter a *Futūh ahl al-Islām*, which seems otherwise unknown; the material may be familiar to Ibn al-Nadīm (wr. 377/987) under the title *Futūh al-Abwāz*. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1871–72), 54; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1968–72), V, 239. Whether this was an independent monograph, or rather a section in a larger work, is at present hard to say—Michael Lecker thinks the former; see his 'Biographical notes on Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā', *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995), 76.

⁵⁹ On al-Baṣra, see Charles Pellat, art. 'al-Baṣra' in *EI*², I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 1085a (which puts the conquest in AH 17); Sāliḥ Ahmad al-'Ali, *Al-Tanzīmāt al-ijtimā'iya wa-l-iqtisādīya fī l-Baṣra fī l-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-ma'ārif, 1953), 25–6 (perhaps as early as AH 14 or 16).

and admittedly much later, Christian source also credits Abū Mūsā with al-Baṣra,⁶⁰ but the evidence is more enticing than clinching.

As far as the conquest is concerned, the Islamic tradition generally has Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī play a dual role. First, he is said to effect the definitive conquest of cities, such as Sūq al-Ahwāz, that had reneged on earlier treaties; and second, he is given a prominent role in the two victories of al-Sūs and Tustar, which broke the back of the Sasanian defence. As we have already seen, on the first of these our Syriac source can offer only silence, which is particularly frustrating since so many cities are said to have reneged on earlier agreements. In the case of Tustar we have another instance of this, but because our Syriac source *does* have something to say here, our conclusions perhaps have more force there.⁶¹ On the second problem—Abū Mūsā's role in the Muslim armies—our Syriac source can suggest that credit for the conquest of al-Sūs and Tustar indeed does belong to Abū Mūsā, rather than to other candidates favoured by our Muslim authorities, particularly Abū Sabra, whom Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. 180/796) gives pride of place in the army that besieged Tustar.⁶²

It is not just the silence of our Syriac source that makes Abū Sabra's role at Tustar a problem. He is also curiously absent in the very battle scene that Sayf himself describes: it is at Abū Mūsā's feet, rather than Abū Sabra's, that the arrow shot from a traitor's bow dramatically lands, thus turning the tide of the battle.⁶³ It is true that his absence on the field could be argued away on the grounds that the conquest tradition occasionally distinguishes between a commander who has nominal authority over a campaign, and a sub-commander, sometimes called the *amīr al-qitāl*, or 'battle commander', who leads the army into combat, and who has authority to enter into agreements on his superior's behalf.⁶⁴ But no such distinction is made at Tustar, and other sources are as consistent in ignoring Abū Sabra as they are on insisting on the command of Abū Mūsā.⁶⁵

They ignore Abū Sabra's role in Tustar for the simple reason that they ignore him otherwise: Sayf is apparently alone in having him briefly hold the governorship of al-Baṣra after 'Utba ibn Ghazwān and before al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba.⁶⁶ These then are the terms in which we can understand Abū Sabra's cameo appearance in Sayf's account, and the second reason why we should reject it. For it apparently comes not from an authentic memory of the events in question, but rather was generated by a view widely held by conquest authorities that the governorship of al-Baṣra and the leadership of the Khūzistān campaigns were one and the same.⁶⁷ In the case of Abū Mūsā,

⁶⁰ Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), *Ta'rīkh muikhtasar al-dhawal*, ed. Antoine Salhānī (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1890), 174, knows 'Utba and al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba only as military commanders; the laying out of the *khīṭat*, the building of *manāzil* and the congregational mosque, Arab settlement—all these are credited to Abū Mūsā. Al-Ya'qūbī (*Historiae*, II, 163) explicitly credits 'Utba with the *ikhlīṣat* of the site.

⁶¹ See below.

⁶² Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2553–6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, 2554.

⁶⁴ Thus Suhayl ibn 'Adī in *ibid.*, I, 2506–7.

⁶⁵ Thus tribesmen boast that they fought alongside Abū Mūsā; see Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), *Al-Musāma'*, ed. Sa'īd al-Lahhām (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1989), VIII, 17; on p. 32 Abū Mūsā is explicitly identified as the *amīr al-jaysh*. Al-Qummī (*Ta'rīkh-i Qummī*, 295) puts Abū 'Ubayda's and Ibn Ishāq's reports under the rubric *dhikr-i fatḥ-i Abū Mūsā Ash'arī*.

⁶⁶ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2498, 2550–51.

⁶⁷ Note that al-Balādhurī's first report (*Futūh*, 376: *qālū*), which outlines the overall sequence of events, conspicuously and explicitly connects the conquest of al-Ahwāz with the administration of al-Baṣra: 'They reported: al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba raided Sūq al-Ahwāz during his governorship when 'Utba ibn Ghazwān was removed from al-Baṣra at the end of the year 15 or the beginning of the year 16...then Abū Mūsā raided it when 'Umar appointed him governor of al-Baṣra after al-Mughīra'.

where we have a broad Islamic consensus that is corroborated by our Syriac source, there is good reason to think that the view is correct: Abū Mūsā founded al-Baṣra and did play a starring role in the conquest of Khūzistān. In the case of Abū Sabra we have only Sayf.

Abū Sabra's obscurity may have had narrative advantages for Sayf, who has him oversee what is presented as two separate armies, one Baṣran and one Kūfan.⁶⁸ These armies pose problems of their own. Now because our Syriac source implies that Abū Mūsā came to Khūzistān from al-Baṣra, we can put some stock in the Islamic accounts that speak of Baṣran armies as well.⁶⁹ Kūfan participation in the conquest of the south is altogether harder to confirm, however. As Donner has noted,⁷⁰ the introduction of reinforcements into the Khūzistān campaign—of which the Kūfans under al-Nu'mān ibn al-Muqarrin or 'Ammār ibn Yāsir figure very prominently—was a matter of some controversy. In what follows I shall offer some suggestions why.

The conquest of Khūzistān

At issue was the region's revenues, since it was by claiming conquest experience that one argued one's share; in other words, the conquest record was influenced by post-conquest politics.⁷¹ Sayf preserves an account that has al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays voicing Baṣran grievances vis-à-vis the Kūfans soon after the conquest of Sūq al-Ahwāz, and to judge by 'Umar's response, his argument was convincing: in addition to doling out to the Baṣrans former Sasanian crown land, 'Umar is said to have increased the number of Baṣrans receiving 2,000 *dirhams* by including among them all those who had fought at (Sūq) al-Ahwāz.⁷² The Baṣrans and Kūfans disputed about Tustar in particular. The categorical assertion that Tustar belongs to the Baṣrans is warning enough that administrative geography was controversial,⁷³ and echoes of the controversy can be heard even as late as Yāqūt's time, when some apparently claimed that Tustar belonged to al-Ahwāz, while others held that it belonged to al-Baṣra. Yāqūt also tells of a heated exchange between the two parties that took place before 'Umar, each claiming Tustar as their own.⁷⁴ Ibn A'ṭham al-Kufī has a much longer version of this, or a similar, scene.

The Baṣrans and Kūfans came to argue, the Baṣrans saying: 'The conquest is ours!' and the Kūfans saying: 'No, the conquest is ours!' So they argued about it to the point that something truly disagreeable almost happened between them.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2553: *wa-'alā l-farīqayn jāmī'au Abū Sabra*. Cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 380: *hawila ahl al-Baṣra wa-ahl al-Kūfa*. Cf. the much later case of al-Muhallab and 'Attāb ibn Warqā', where the position of *anūr al-jamā'a* (= *anūr al-qitāl*) is determined by conquest claims by Baṣrans and Kūfans; see al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898), *Al-Kāmil fī l-huqqa wa-l-adab*, ed. William Wright (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1874–92), 675.

⁶⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2552–54; Ibn A'ṭham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān et al. (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmāniya, 1388–95/1968–75), II, 5; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 372–3.

⁷⁰ See Donner, 'Conquests', 342 n. 229.

⁷¹ Cf. Robert Brunschwig, 'Ibn 'Abdalhakam et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord par les arabes: étude critique', *AIEO* 6 (1942–47), 110–55. Cf. the case of the Jazira in C. F. Robinson, *Empire and elites after the Muslim conquest: the transformation of northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6ff.

⁷² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2539–40; cf. I, 2672–3.

⁷³ Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 35: *wa-Tustar miu ard al-Baṣra*.

⁷⁴ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, I, 849 (both accounts).

⁷⁵ Ibn A'ṭham, *Futūḥ*, II, 27. Cf. the dispute between a Kūfan and a Syrian, where the former crows about his townsmen's victories: 'We were the victors at the battle of al-Qādisiyya and the battle of such-and-such' (*nalimū ashāb yawm al-Qādisiyya wa-yawm kādhā wa-kādhā...*), and the latter about his townsmen's victories (including al-Yarmūk), in Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 17.

The solution that ‘Umar is here given to provide holds that although the conquest is indeed to be credited to the Baṣrāns, its benefits accrue to Baṣrāns and Kūfans alike.⁷⁶

‘Umar’s view that conquest revenues were to be distributed to the Baṣrāns and Kūfans is more fully described by Ibn A’tham. Here Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī writes to the caliph, requesting reinforcements for the upcoming battle at Tustar; the caliph responds by dispatching a Kūfan commander, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir. As in other reports,⁷⁷ the operative terms (*istamadda, amadda*) are topological, in this case probably employed not only to emphasize the role of the caliph in conquest decision making,⁷⁸ but also to bring Kūfan troops into a picture that had been dominated by Baṣrāns. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir is then given to describe the contents of the letter from ‘Umar: ‘He (the caliph) is ordering me to march to Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī to come to the aid of our believing brethren from al-Baṣra’ (*li-muṣrat ikhwāninā al-mu’mīnīn min ahl al-Baṣra*).⁷⁹ Then, after the battle, ‘Umar passes judgement on the ensuing controversy:⁸⁰

Tustar is [to be considered] among the conquests (*magħāzī*) of the Baṣrāns even though they were aided by their brethren from among the Kūfans (*innanī nusirū bi-ikhwānihim min ahl al-Kūfa*). The same thing goes for the Kūfans: if they make raids in their marches (*thughūr*), and the Baṣrāns come to their aid, there is no harm [done to their claim] (*lam yakun bi-dhiālika ba’s*). For according to the book of God, victory belongs to [all] the believers; God has made [all] the believers brethren.⁸¹ The conquest is the Baṣrāns’, but the Kūfans are their equals in the rewards and spoils (*shurakā’uhum fī l-ajr wa-l-ghanīma*). Beware the discords inspired by Satan!⁸²

A post-conquest opinion on the division of spoils—i.e. that merely by assisting (*nusra*) the Baṣrāns, the Kūfans had earned a full share—is thus detectable in a tradition that purports to describe the conquest itself. That precisely this issue was controversial is made clear elsewhere, in a work that is explicitly legal in character.⁸³ The late and polemical character of the account explains ‘Umar’s eirenic tone: all the rivalry that we might expect of campaigning armies, and of which we have clear echoes in the post-conquest disputes,⁸⁴ is stifled by a unitary and providential view of conquest history.

Post-conquest disputes influenced the historical record in other ways as well. If some attributed to ‘Umar the view that the Baṣrāns and Kūfans were to share equally in the spoils, others thought differently. Thus Yāqūt preserves an echo of another view, which held that ‘Umar granted the revenues of Tustar to the Baṣrāns rather than to the Kūfans, on the grounds that it was closer to al-Baṣra than it was to Kūfa.⁸⁵ In one of the titles attributed to al-Madā’īnī

⁷⁶ Ibn A’tham, *Futūh*, II, 27.

⁷⁷ Al-Tabarī, *Ta’rikh*, I, 2534.

⁷⁸ See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 123–6. But cf. C. F. Robinson, ‘The study of Islamic historiography: a progress report’, *JRAS* 3, 7, 9 (1997), 218 ff.

⁷⁹ Ibn A’tham, *Futūh*, II, 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 27.

⁸¹ Cf. Sūrat al-Anfāl (8), v. 74; Sūrat al-Rūm (30), v. 47; Sūrat al-Hujurāt (49), v. 10.

⁸² The vocabulary remains quranic: see, in particular, Sūrat al-Nisā’ (4), v. 12; Sūrat Yūsuf (12), v. 100; Sūrat al-Rūm (30), v. 28.

⁸³ See al-Tabarī, *Ikhtilāf al-suqahā*, ed. Joseph Schacht (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1933), 68–71.

⁸⁴ One can only wonder about the contents of the *Fakhr ahl al-Kūfa ‘alā l-Baṣra* by al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823), and the *Muṣākharat ahl al-Baṣra wa-ahl al-Kūfa* by al-Madā’īnī (d. 228/842); on which see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 100, 104. Cf. also al-Yāqūtī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1885; *BGA* 7), 167–73.

⁸⁵ Yāqūt, *Mu’jam al-buldān*, I, 849: *fa-ja’alahā ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb min ard al-Baṣra li-qurbihā minhā*.

(d. 228/842), the *Khabar al-Baṣra wa-futūhihā wa-futūh mā yuqāribuhā min Dahistān wa-l-Ahwāz wa-Māsabdhān wa-ghayr dhālika*,⁸⁶ we may have a reconstruction of conquest history according to this principle.

Hinds has shown how Baṣran participation in the initial conquest of Fārs could be exaggerated by our sources.⁸⁷ Given the problems surrounding the Kūfans in Khūzistān, those determined to reconstruct history could do worse than to rethink the Kūfans' role here.

The question of treaties

Things are perhaps only slightly less thorny when it comes to what our Syriac source calls a 'truce' (*shaynā*). That the campaigns in Khūzistān were interrupted by a short-lived peace is clear enough; the problem is that the one promising account we have in the Islamic tradition, which is Sayf's, identifies al-Hurmuzān and 'Utba ibn Ghazwān, rather than al-Hurmuzān and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, as the parties concerned.⁸⁸

In fact, Sayf knew of two such agreements. Al-Hurmuzān is first said to have reached a *sulh* agreement with 'Utba at Sūq al-Ahwāz, after he had heard of the losses of Manādhir and Nahr Tīrā to Muslim forces:

When the [Muslim] fighting force (*al-qawmī*) moved against al-Hurmuzān and encamped near him in al-Ahwāz, he saw that he lacked the force to do battle. So he requested a *sulh*. They (the Muslims) then wrote to 'Utba about the matter, requesting his instructions. Al-Hurmuzān wrote to him, and 'Utba agreed to the offer on the following terms: [al-Hurmuzān would retain] all of al-Ahwāz and Mihrajānqadhaq, except Nahr Tīrā, Manādhir, and that part of Sūq al-Ahwāz that they (the Muslims) had overrun. What we have liberated will not be returned to them.

A dispute is then said to have arisen concerning the borders between al-Hurmuzān's territory and that of the Muslims; in the aftermath, al-Hurmuzān 'reneged (*kafara*), withheld what he had accepted,⁸⁹ enrolled Kurds (in this army), and so his army grew strong'.⁹⁰ He then took to the field, was defeated at Sūq al-Ahwāz, and eventually fled to Rāmhurmuz. There he reached a second *sulh*, and once again 'Umar is given to impose conditions: "Umar ordered him ('Utba) to accept [al-Hurmuzān's offer], on the following terms: that the land not conquered, i.e. Tustar, al-Sūs, Jundaysābūr, al-Bunyān, and Mihrajānqadhaq [would come under Muslim authority]". Al-Hurmuzān agreed to the terms, which are now described in more detail:

The commanders of the Ahwāz campaign took responsibility for what was assigned to them, and al-Hurmuzān for his *sulh*, [the latter] levying taxes for them, and [the former] protecting him.⁹¹ If the Kurds of Fārs raided him, they would come to his aid and defend him.⁹²

⁸⁶ See Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rīfat al-adīb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac, 1923–31), V, 315; Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Mīlānuf. Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 44.

⁸⁷ Marlin Hinds, 'The first Arab conquests of Fārs', *Iran* 22 (1984), 39–53; reprinted in his *Studies in early Islamic history*, ed. Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad and Patricia Crone (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1996), 197–229.

⁸⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2538–42.

⁸⁹ i.e. what he had agreed to yield in tribute? The Arabic text is *wa-mana'a mā qabilahu*.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2540.

⁹¹ *yānnā 'īnahū*; one might also read *yū'āwinuhūn*, 'and he (al-Hurmuzān) offering aid to them'.

⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2543.

This *sulh* fared no better than the first: after two Muslim forces were sent into al-Ahwāz, one of which was led by Abū Mūsā, al-Hurmuzān engaged al-Nu'mān ibn al-Muqarrin, was defeated, and fled to Tustar.⁹³

Once again, one can be cheered by the common ground: al-Hurmuzān seems to have entered into some kind of agreement with the Muslims, which perhaps stipulated an exchange of tribute for recognition of local authority, and during which al-Hurmuzān reinforced his armies. Although its exact timing escapes us, it must have been reached during, or soon after, the fall of al-Ahwāz. But it is difficult to say much more. The close similarities between Sayf's two agreements might be taken to suggest either that the 'appendix' conflated the two, or that Sayf (or his sources) had so heavily elaborated a single truce account that out of its precipitate emerged two separate accounts. A tentative argument might be made in favour of Sayf's second treaty. For whereas the first says nothing explicit about tribute, the second clearly stipulates that al-Hurmuzān collect taxes for the Muslims. Moreover, it is only at this point that Abū Mūsā enters the scene, and it is here too that Tustar emerges as a stronghold for al-Hurmuzān: to Tustar he withdraws after his defeat, and to Tustar comes help from the people of Fārs. Finally, a later passage that mentions 'the rebellion (*intiqād*) of al-Hurmuzān' clearly alludes to the breaking of the second treaty.⁹⁴

Al-Sūs: leadership, Asāwira, and Daniel

Since our Syriac source places Hormizdān at both Shūsh and Shūshtrā, and describes his capture in the latter, we are to infer that it fell after Shūsh. Donner argues the opposite, putting al-Sūs after Tustar.⁹⁵ On this sequence no authority is cited, but it is implicit in Sayf in al-Ṭabarī,⁹⁶ and explicit in al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/891).⁹⁷ There appears to have been some disagreement on the matter, however. Al-Ṭabarī freely volunteers that there was no consensus about the conquest of al-Sūs,⁹⁸ al-Balādhurī discusses Tustar after al-Sūs,⁹⁹ and Ibn al-A'ṭham, as well as Abū 'Ubayda (d. 211/826) and Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761, as preserved by al-Qummī, d. 805/1402), clearly put the fall of al-Sūs before that of Tustar.¹⁰⁰ This was Caetani's view,¹⁰¹ and it is vindicated by our Syriac source.

In the precise course of the conquest of al-Sūs the Islamic sources evince little interest. A failed ruse attempted by al-Sūs's (anonymous) *marzbān* is featured in one of al-Balādhurī's accounts, according to which an *amān* was granted, and where there is no suggestion that the city was penetrated;¹⁰² the point is that Abū Mūsā saw through the *marzbān*'s trick, executing him and 80 fighters (*muqātila*) as a result.¹⁰³ A version of the same story is then related by a participant in the battle; here we read of an anonymous *dihqān*.¹⁰⁴ Ibn

⁹³ *ibid.*, I, 2552–3.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, I, 2614.

⁹⁵ Donner, *Conquests*, 216.

⁹⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 2551–6.

⁹⁷ Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 140.

⁹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 2561: *ikhtalafa ahl al-siyar fī amrihā*. Sayf's account of the conquest of Tustar (*ibid.*, I, 2542–5) may be out of place.

⁹⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378–81.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn A'ṭham, *Futūh*, II, 9: *thunma sāra Abū Mūsā ilā Tustar ba'd farāghihi min amr al-Sūs*; al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qummī*, 295 (al-Sūs follows Manādhir).

¹⁰¹ Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, IV, 454.

¹⁰² Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 378–9; see also Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 32; al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qummī*, 295.

A‘tham has a version of the same story, but now both the *marzbān* (Sābūr ibn Ādharmāhān) and a lieutenant are given names.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Sayf seems to be at pains to demonstrate the clemency of the victorious Muslims: the city is stormed after a siege, the conquered pathetically beg for mercy, and a *sullī* is granted by the Muslims, who are apparently led by Abū Sabra, although Abū Mūsā is also present. Behind the tradition—and perhaps the trickery account as well—there are signs of some disagreement: the granting of a *sullī* after the Muslims’ violent entrance (*ba‘d mā dakhalūlā ‘anwatan*), and the division of spoils that is said to have taken place before the *sullī* (*wa‘qtasamū mā aşābū qabla l-sullī*) suggest that this is a reconciling account,¹⁰⁵ intended to accommodate conflicting *sullī* and ‘*anwa* traditions.¹⁰⁶ The failed ruse may perform a similar function for Ibn A‘tham: spoils were taken after an *anwān* because of the trickery.¹⁰⁷ Certainly our Syriac account, which details the killing of Christians in the city, does not inspire much confidence in reports such as these. In none of these Islamic accounts does al-Hurmuzān appear.

In Sayf’s report al-Hurmuzān is again absent in the Sasanian defence, but we may have an echo of his presence: al-Shahriyār, said to be al-Hurmuzān’s brother, leads the Muslims in battle. It is here that we get a glimpse at what really concerned the authorities: the fate of the *asāwira*, the elite cavalry of the Sasanian army. The *asāwira*, like so much in early Islamic history, are only now beginning to receive their due, and although the conquest accounts have generally been enough to persuade historians that they converted in this period,¹⁰⁸ there is some evidence to suggest that their conversion is a product of the Umayyad period.¹⁰⁹ For early Muslim traditionists it was probably not so much their conversion that was at issue as the top stipends that they were awarded; that al-Balādhurī devoted an entire section to *amir al-asāwira wa-l-zutū* at least suggests that the issue retained some interest as late as his day.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, there was a view that the *asāwira* remained loyal to the Sasanians through Tustar. Thus Ibn A‘tham, whose sequence follows that of our Syriac source, has no problem in putting not only *marāziba*, but also *asāwira* in al-Hurmuzān’s forces that resisted the Muslims at Tustar;¹¹¹ Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/844) also preserves a reconstruction of events that has al-Hurmuzān commanding a group of *asāwira* at Tustar.¹¹² On the other hand, al-Madā’īnī seems to reflect a widely held view that Siyāh al-Uswārī was sent by Yazdagird to defend al-Sūs, while al-Hurmuzān was sent to Tustar; and when, according to al-Balādhurī’s sources, Siyāh learned of the capitulation of al-Sūs, or, according to al-Madā’īnī, came to realize more generally that the Muslims

¹⁰⁴ Ibn A‘tham, *Futūh*, II, 6–7.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the case of Sūq al-Ahwāz, about which Khalifa ibn Khayyāl (*Ta‘rīkh*, I, 106) reports that it was conquered *sullīn aw ‘anwātan*.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Tabārī, *Ta‘rīkh*, I, 2565. Cf. Albrecht Noth, ‘Zum Verhältnis von Kalifer Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in umayyadischer Zeit. Die ‘*Sullī*-‘Anwa’ Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq’, *WT* 14 (1973), 150–62.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn A‘tham, *Futūh*, II, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Bertold Spuler, *Irau im frühislamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1952), 254; Morony, *Iraq*, 198. On the *asāwira* in early Islam in general, Mohsen Zakeri, *Sāsānid soldiers and early Muslim society: the origins of ‘Ayyārūn and Futuwwa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), index, s.v.

¹⁰⁹ Patricia Crone, *Slaves on horses: the evolution of the Islamic polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 237 n. 362.

¹¹⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 372–3. Among the titles attributed to al-Madā’īnī is a *Kitāb al-asāwira*; see Ridā Tajaddud’s edition of the *Fihrist* (Tehran: Maṭba‘at-i Dānishgāh, 1971), 115; Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: a tenth-century survey of Muslim culture* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), I, 225 (Flügel, *Fihrist*, 103, reads *Kitāb al-istiāra*).

¹¹¹ Ibn A‘tham, *Futūh*, II, 13.

¹¹² Ibn Sa‘d, *Kitāb al-ṣabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. Eduard Sachau et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904–40), V, 64.

were overwhelming the Sasanians, he and the *asāwira* enrolled in the Muslim armies instead.¹¹³ This opens the door—perhaps only narrowly—for the participation of the *asāwira* at Tustar, which was reluctantly conceded.¹¹⁴

Indeed, it is only by presuming that they converted before Tustar that we can understand Sayf's version of events. For Sayf has it that 'Umar ordered Abū Mūsā to assign them the highest stipend, equal to that granted to any Arab tribesman, even though Abū Mūsā had nothing but disdain for their feeble effort at Tustar. A few lines of poetry that follow give voice to consequent Arab resentment:

When 'Umar (*al-fārūq*) saw the excellence of their valor
And came to see what might come of the matter,¹¹⁵
He assigned to them a stipend of two thousand,
Having seen fit to give the 'Akk and Ḥimyar a stipend of three hundred.¹¹⁶

Reports that identify Sīnah/Sineh as the *traitor* who betrayed Tustar to the Muslims presumably reflect the same anti-*asāwira* sentiments that produced these lines.¹¹⁷

We are on firmer ground concerning Daniel. The legendary connection between Daniel and al-Sūs is not an Islamic invention.¹¹⁸ It had been made before Islam,¹¹⁹ and by the seventh century (if not earlier) it appears to have gained wide currency. Thus, the Armenian history attributed to Sebēos (wr. c. 660–70) relates that the Byzantine emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) made an unsuccessful attempt to remove Daniel's body from al-Sūs to Constantinople; as in our Syriac account, here too various claims were made about the identity of the deceased.¹²⁰ It is in the light of this material that we should read our Syriac account: 'they [the Arabs] seized the house that is called the "House of Mār Daniel", and took the treasure there enclosed, which had been kept there on the kings' orders since the days of Darius and Cyrus'. It is in the same light that we should also read the Arabic accounts of how Daniel's body was discovered in al-Sūs; these are positively ubiquitous in the conquest tradition.¹²¹

As late antique monotheists, the conquering Muslims might be expected to have taken an interest in Daniel, in this period considered a prophet not only by Christians, but also by some Jews.¹²² He does not appear in the Quran, but remembering that this inventory was not complete,¹²³ and assuming as

¹¹³ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2562–4; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 372–3, on the authority of 'a group of learned men' (*janā'a min ahl al-'ilm*).

¹¹⁴ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 382; *yuqāl...wa-Allāh a'lam*, 'it is said...but God knows best', al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2563, 2564; *wa-qawm yaqūlūna*, 'there are some who say'.

¹¹⁵i.e. he recognized their potential, as well as the hazards of putting them off.

¹¹⁶ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2563–4.

¹¹⁷ On the betrayal of Tustar, below.

¹¹⁸ Which seems to be implied by William Brinner in his translation, *The history of al-Tabarī*, II: *Prophets and patriarchs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 48 n. 129; and Georges Vajda, art. 'Dāniyāl' in *EJ*², II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 112b.

¹¹⁹ See the evidence gathered by Louis Ginzberg in his *The legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1928), VI, 437 n. 20.

¹²⁰ *Histoire d'Hérachius*, 29–30. Cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378: *qīla innā fīhi juththat Dāniyāl*.

¹²¹ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2566–7; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 6–9; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31; al-Qummi, *Tārīkh-i Qummī*, 296–7; Ibn Zanjawayh (d. 251/865), *Kitāb al-anwāl*, ed. Shākir Dhīb Fayyād (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Faysal li-l-buhūth wa-l-dirāsāt, 1986), II, 748; Ibn Abī 'Adasa (fl. 9th/15th c.), *Qisās al-anbiyā*, Khālidī Library (Jerusalem), Ms. Ar. 86, fol. 114r. See also M. Kevran and S. Renimel, 'Suse islamique: remarques préliminaires et perspectives', *Studia Iranica* 3 (1974), 256.

¹²² See John Barton, *Oracles of God: perceptions of prophecy in Israel after the exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 36–7, 99; Geza Vermes, 'Josephus' treatment of the Book of Daniel', *JJS*, 42 (1991), 158 with n. 14.

¹²³ See Sūrat Ghāfir (40), v. 78: *wa-la-qad arsalnā rusulan min qablika minhum man qasasnā 'alayka wa-minhum man lam naqṣiṣ 'alayka*, 'We sent Messengers before thee; of some We have

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well that this inventory gradually created, rather than reflected, a consensus, one might speculate that the conquering Muslims had open minds.¹²⁴

In contrast to the attitudes of the conquering Muslims, the concerns of the later traditionists are fairly clear. First, Daniel's prophecies enjoyed some popularity in the early period, and this almost certainly reflects the broad appeal of apocalyptic texts among Christians¹²⁵ and Muslims alike.¹²⁶ In fact, Sayf (or one of his sources) betrays an Islamic triumphalism that is only fully intelligible in the light of Christian millenarian anxieties that tied the conquest of al-Sūs to the eschaton. Sayf reports that the monks and priests (*al-ruhbān wa-l-qassīsūn*) mocked the besieging Muslims from the top of the walls of the city: 'O host of Arabs, among the things taught us by our learned men and ancestors is that only the Antichrist, or an army led by the Antichrist (*qawm fīhim al-dajjāl*), will conquer al-Sūs. If the Antichrist is leading you, you will take it (al-Sūs); if he is not, don't bother besieging us'.¹²⁷ Of course in the eyes of Muslim informants the conquests were the work not of the Antichrist, but of God Himself; and far from marking the beginning of the End, they came to mark an altogether new beginning. The successful siege of al-Sūs thus makes a mockery of the Christians and their misplaced trust, turning what must have been a familiar *topos* on its head.¹²⁸

The Daniel tradition seems to have been informed by iconoclastic concerns as well.¹²⁹ Here it may be significant that the Syriac does not corroborate the Islamic accounts that describe the Arabs' relocation of Daniel's body. Although the story is recounted in several different ways,¹³⁰ all are drawn together by a shared concern to make the site inaccessible to those determined to locate—and perhaps translate—relics.¹³¹

related to thee, and some We have not related to thee' (Arberry). Cf. the relatively early discussion in 'Abd al-Malik ibn Habib (d. 238/852), *Kitāb al-ta'rīkh*, ed. Jorge Aguadé (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1991), 26–7.

¹²⁴ In fact, occasional passages in the Islamic sources echo the Rabbis' rejection of his prophetic status, and sound like special pleading. Note, for instance, the words attributed to Abū Sabra (al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2566), but particularly those of 'Alī, who answered a query by stating: *bal hādhā Dāniyāl al-hakim wa-l-muwa ghayr mursal* (Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 8); cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31: *fa-imma nabi* (but not, it appears, a *rasūl*). For a particularly rich discussion of *rasūl* and *nabi*, see Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension (King and Saviour V)* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1955), chapters I–4.

¹²⁵ For the use of the Danielic paradigm in apocalypses and histories, see G. J. Reinink, 'Ps.-Methodius: a concept of history in response to the rise of Islam', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, I: problems in the literary source material* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 161–6; and (in the same volume), H. J. W. Drijvers, 'The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: a Syriac apocalypse from the early Islamic period', 201–08.

¹²⁶ See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), *Taqyīd al-'ihu*, ed. Yūsuf al-'Ushsh (Damascus: Dār ihyā' al-sunna al-nabawiyya, 1949), 51, 56–7 (a scribe from al-Sūs copies the Book of Daniel and is scolded for doing so; first noted by Crone, *Slaves*, 18). On the popularity of Daniel among early Sasanian Jews, see Jacob Neusner, *A history of the Jews in Babylonia, II: The early Sasanian period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 236–7.

¹²⁷ Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2564–5.

¹²⁸ The presence of the Antichrist in a besieging army has a long tradition in Christian writing; for a fourth-century example, see Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the millennium*, revised ed. (London: Pimlico, 1993), 27–8.

¹²⁹ A strong aversion to relics and icons is attested in an early eighth-century source from southern Iraq; for a brief summary of the unpublished Syriac disputation between a monk of Bēt Hālē and an Arab, see G. J. Reinink, trans., *Die syrische Apokalypse des pseudo-Methodius* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993; CSCO 541, *Scr. syri* 221), xlvi. See also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it*, 465–72; for some tentative archaeological evidence for Islamic iconoclasm, see Robert Schick, *The Christian communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic rule: a historical and archeological study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 207–09.

¹³⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378; al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2567; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 8–9.

¹³¹ The reason is made explicit by Ibn A'tham (*Futūh*, II, 8), who has 'Alī recommend that the body be reburied 'in a place where the people of al-Sūs would not be able to find his grave', cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31–2, on a Tustar corpse discussed below: 'a place known only to you two'. According to al-Qummī (*Tārikh-i Qummī*, 297), only some Qummīs who just happened to be in al-Sūs were told of its location.

Tustar I: traitors and treaties

If the historiography of the conquest of Khūzistān has generally moved little from Wellhausen's day, an exception is the siege of Tustar.¹³² The historicity of this siege was accepted by Wellhausen and Caetani,¹³³ and continues to be accepted elsewhere; in some quarters this also includes an act of treachery on the part of a Tustarī local, which delivered the city into the Muslims' hands.¹³⁴ But with Noth we finally have a dissident voice. Pointing to the multiplicity of siege accounts in the Islamic conquest traditions in general, and adducing the Tustar account in particular, he argues that they must be interpreted as a feature of historical discourse: they represent 'not the reporting of history, but rather the deployment of literary stereotypes'.¹³⁵

In general terms, Noth is certainly correct: siege/betrayal accounts can function stereotypically,¹³⁶ 'drifting' from one event to the next.¹³⁷ It may be that the appearance of the *topos* in the *futūh* literature is in some way related to the treacherous Jew of the *sīra*.¹³⁸ Since the repertoire of pre-Islamic Syriac historical writing includes siege accounts of great drama,¹³⁹ one might also suggest that it was popular enough to circulate widely in the Near East of late antiquity.¹⁴⁰ In any case, just as a specific *takbīr* account can be corroborated by an early Syriac source,¹⁴¹ so too, it appears, can the occasional siege. In this particular case, accounts that relate a siege and betrayal quite clearly reflect an early—and authentic—memory of events. For there is Syriac corroboration not only for the betrayal of the city, but also for the length of the siege (two years),¹⁴² as well as for the Muslims' penetration of the city through water tunnels under its walls.¹⁴³

¹³² The siege is very well attested in the Islamic sources; see Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 133, 138–42; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28–32; al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2552–6; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 380; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 137–8; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 12–15, 18–23; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, V, 64; al-Qumī, *Tārīkh-i Qummī*, 297–8. See also Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rīkh*, 174.

¹³³ Wellhausen, 'Prolegomena', 96; Caetani, *Attuali dell'Islam*, IV, 457–8.

¹³⁴ D. R. Hill, for example, considers: 'That the entry was effected through the treachery of a citizen is quite probable, the Muslims at this time being ineffectual in siege warfare'. See his *The termination of hostilities in the early Arab conquests, A.D. 634–65* (London: Luzac, 1971), 134; 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, 'The Arab conquest of Iran and its aftermath', in *Cambridge history of Iran*, IV, ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 15: 'The siege of Shustar was protracted, but in the end an Iranian's treachery—his name was Siyā—enabled the Arabs to enter the city'.

¹³⁵ Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 19.

¹³⁶ The traitor *topos* is also noted by Lawrence I. Conrad, 'The conquest of Arwād: a source-critical study in the historiography of the early medieval Near East', in Cameron and Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, 363.

¹³⁷ On 'drift', see Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 109.

¹³⁸ Conrad, 'Arwād', 363, citing Wansbrough, *Sectarian milieu*, 18–21, 109 (on the motif of the treacherous Jew in the *sīra* tradition).

¹³⁹ Of the many examples that could be cited, see ps.-Zacharias Rhetor (wr. c. 550), *Historia ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks (Paris: L. Durbeq, 1919–21; CSCO 83–84, *Scr. syri* 38–39), VII.iii–iv (25–28/16–19), 1X.xvii (132–33/90–91). Similarly, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Styliste* (written c. 518), ed. and trans. William Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 50/42 (guards fall asleep): 'Whether then through this remissness, as we think, or by an act of treachery, as people said, or as a chastisement from God...' (Wright's translation); and 68/59 ('deserter' helps Byzantines against Persians): Also, compare the final section of translated Syriac above (a Qatārī colludes with someone who has a house on the city walls) with ps.-Joshua, 69/59–60 (defenders have built temporary houses on the walls); are we to understand that the co-conspirator was part of the force defending the city?

¹⁴⁰ It almost goes without saying that stories such as these have a very long tradition. Cf. Joshua 2, which describes how Rahab, a harlot in Jericho, admits, shelters, and cuts a deal with Israelite spies that guarantees the safety of her family; for a discussion and bibliography, see J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua: a commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 34–43.

¹⁴¹ Crone, *Slaves*, 12.

¹⁴² Thus Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, V, 64 (a variant also proposes eighteen months); Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 139 (around a year), 141 (two years or eighteen months); Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28 (around a year).

¹⁴³ Thus Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28: *fa-adkhalalni min madkhāl al-mā'*; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 139: *fa-adkhalalni min madkhāl al-mā' madkhālan*; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 20:

Of course this is not to say that we should accept the Tustar traditions in their entirety. For sieges produce tales: tales of courage, piety, steadfastness, of clemency, arrogance, and hubris. As Nöldeke remarked,¹⁴⁴ the particularly long seige of Tustar produced its share of stories, and these probably explain why the conquest was invoked in apparently stereotypical fashion.¹⁴⁵ We may even have a very brief glimpse of the *Sitz im Leben* of some of the storytelling. Asked by 'Umar to speak on the conquest of Tustar, 'Ziyād (ibn Abīhi) arose and spoke with such skill that the people were astonished by his eloquence, proclaiming: Ibn 'Ubayd is a *khaṭīb*!¹⁴⁶ Needless to say, a performance such as this one earned praise not for its dogged fidelity to what happened, but by moving people; what mattered was not a close correspondence to historical truth, but rather the speaker's impressive command of a rhetoric that told a great story. Since the process by which memory was clouded by tale-telling was already well under way when we get our first look at our traditions, there is no question of finding an Islamic account that has survived unaffected: legendary material crowds our early accounts (Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Abī Shayba, and Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt),¹⁴⁷ as it crowds our later sources.

Now some of this material, such as the legendary *awā'il*, we can safely argue away, not only because they are usually so transparent, but also because they are often expendable: no serious interpretation of the conquest of Tustar turns on 'the first to light the fire at the gate of Tustar'.¹⁴⁸ The point I would emphasize here is the difficulty of distinguishing between the baby and the bath. Without our Syriac text, for example, we would not know that it was apparently only the *identity* of the traitor that was conditioned by polemics. In most of the early accounts the traitor remains stubbornly anonymous,¹⁴⁹ but exceptions are al-Dīnawarī and Abū 'Ubayda/Ibn Ishāq (as preserved in al-Qummī); in both cases the figure starts out anonymously (*rajul min ashraf ahl al-madīna, dihqān az jumleh-i buzurgān-i Tustar*), but is then identified as a certain Sīna/Sīneh (*iwa'smuhi Sīna, nām-i ū Sīneh*).¹⁵⁰ As we have already seen, his appearance here should probably be explained in the light of *asāwira* polemics; we may also have yet another example of the 'onomatomania' of the Islamic tradition.¹⁵¹

nahr Tustar. The 'appendix' thus clinches Gautier Juynboll's argument that something authentic lay behind Sayf's material (al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2554–5: *makhrāj al-mā'*); see the second appendix to his Tabarī translation, *The history of al-Tabarī, XIII: the conquest of Iraq, southwestern Persia and Egypt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 227–9. For a rehabilitation (on very different grounds) of the view that Jerusalem fell to the 'Israelites' because the latter penetrated the city's defences through an aqueduct, see Z. Abells and A. Arbit, 'Some new thoughts on Jerusalem's ancient water system', *PEQ* 127 (1995), 2.

¹⁴⁴ Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 44 n. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Tribesmen crowded about their presence at the battle, one boasting that he had participated in the battles of al-Qādisīya, Jalūla', Tustar, Nihāwand, and al-Yarmūk; see al-Fasawī (277/890), *Kitāb al-na'rifa wa-l-ta'rīkh*, ed. Akram Dīyā' al-'Umarī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1981), I, 233. Cf. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), 'Uyīn al-akhbār, ed. Ahmad Zakī al-'Adawī (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1343–48/1925–30), III, 245 (Isfahān, Tustar, Mihrajān, *kuwar al-Alwāz*, Fārs).

¹⁴⁶ Fa-qāma Ziyād fa-takallama fa-ablagha fa-ajiba al-uās min bayānihi wa-qāli inna Ibn 'Ubayd la-khaṭīb; see al-Zubayrī (d. 236/851), *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1953), 244–5. The *locus classicus* for Ziyād's eloquence is his famous *khuṭba butrā* delivered to the Basrans; on his reputation for eloquence, see Henri Lammens, 'Ziād ibn Abīhi, vice-roi de l'Iraq, lieutenant de Mo'awiya', reprinted in his *Études sur le siècle des Omayyades* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1930), 60.

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 31–2; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 138–42. Cf. also Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 18–25 (for heroes).

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 31.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, VIII, 34: *dihqān Tustar*; al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2554: *rajul*; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 139: *rajul min ahl Tustar*; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 380: *rajulūn uin al-a'ājim*.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 138; al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qumm*, 297–8. Cf. Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 20, where the 'Nasībeh' must be a variant of this name; also Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28, where the traitor is identified as the brother of a victim of al-Hurmuzān.

¹⁵¹ See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 126; also Crone, *Slaves*, 16.

Of the traitor's actual identity we shall probably never know the details,¹⁵² for the Nestorian authorities naturally had their own axes to grind; here, like in the Arabic, the identity of the traitor was polemically conditioned. The provenance of the Tustar traitor is suspiciously the same as that of a certain Peter, also a native of Bēt Qatrāyē, who is said to have betrayed Alexandria to the Persians in an early part of the chronicle.¹⁵³ In neither Alexandria nor in Tustar can we corroborate the identities of these men, and to explain why Bēt Qatrāyē is given to provide figures such as these we should probably look to the Nestorian ecclesiastical controversies that took place when our work was being assembled. For it was in the middle of the seventh century that the bishops of Fārs, and soon after, Bēt Qatrāyē, refused to acknowledge the authority of Ishō'yab III, who served as catholicos of the Nestorian church from 649 to 659.¹⁵⁴ Several of the letters written by Ishō'yab III address the problem of the recalcitrant bishops of Bēt Qatrāyē,¹⁵⁵ and one, which can be dated to the period between 649 and 659, states that George, the bishop of Shūshtrā, was among those enrolled to argue the catholicos' view.¹⁵⁶ Just as in the case of the Islamic tradition, history was apparently pressed into service to express views about the present: the Qatārenes' threat to the unity of the Nestorian church in Ishō'yab's day gave rise to the tradition of a Qatārene's betrayal of the Nestorians to the Muslims in Tustar.

Our Syriac source cannot shed any direct light on a report that describes a *sulh* in Tustar, on which the Tustaris reneged (*kafara*); the city is then said to have been reconquered by *muhājirūn*.¹⁵⁷ In its earliest datable form the tradition is credited by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī (d. 211/826),¹⁵⁸ as by al-Balādhurī after him, to Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), on the authority of 'Atā' al-Khurāsānī (d. 133/750).¹⁵⁹ The tradition being impossible to confirm,¹⁶⁰ we might explain it in the light of post-conquest polemics. Considering that the issue addressed by 'Atā' is a taxation anomaly—why 'Umar exempted the issue of conquest unions between the *muhājirūn* and Tustarī women—one is tempted to think that the tradition is primarily aetiological. Similarly, if the purported participation of the *muhājirūn* might have functioned to endow Tustar with high-status settlers,¹⁶¹ so too might accounts that posit a city's

¹⁵² There is no mention of a traitor in the account available to Ibn Sa'd (*Tabaqāt*, V, 64), but here Ibn Sa'd is interested only in the events that follow al-Hurmuzān's surrender.

¹⁵³ See 25/22. On Bēt Qatrāyē, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Diocèses syriens orientaux du Golfe Persique', in *Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1969), 209–12 (reprinted in *Communautés*, Chapter II).

¹⁵⁴ For an overview of the controversy, see Fiey, 'Ishō'yaw le Grand'.

¹⁵⁵ See *Ishō'yahb Patriarchae III Liber epistularum*, ed. and trans. Rubens Duval (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1904–1905; CSCO 11–12, *Scr. syri* 11–12), nos. 17–20 in the third cycle of letters, written while Ishō'yab was catholicos.

¹⁵⁶ *Liber epistularum*, 259/187.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 382; Ibn Zanjawayh, *Annwāl*, II, 439.

¹⁵⁸ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī, *Musāmmāf*, ed. Habib al-Rahmān al-A'zamī (Beirut: Al-Majlis, al-'ilmī, 1390–1407/1970–87), V, 293 (first cited by Patricia Crone, 'The first-century concept of *Hijra*', *Arabica* 41 [1994], 358).

¹⁵⁹ On Ibn Jurayj and this 'Atā' (who is not to be confused with 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāh), see Harald Motzki, *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991), 183–218.

¹⁶⁰ To expect our Syriac source to concede that Tustar's Nestorian authorities reneged on an earlier agreement—unless, of course, it was to be portrayed as heroic resistance—is perhaps as unreasonable as it is to expect the Islamic tradition to record the apparently wanton killing of local Christians (on which see below). Hill (*Termination*, 134) is sceptical of this *kufr* tradition, suggesting that it refers to another (unnamed) city.

¹⁶¹ See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 98, 210; and cf. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought in the classical period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46 (explaining the chronological and geographical organization of the *tabaqāt*): 'What may have been at issue is a kind of apostolic truth theory whereby the Prophet's companions and their descendants act as guarantors of the true faith in the cities where they settled'. (It almost goes without saying that the authors disagree about the reliability of the early source material.) Cf. C. F. Robinson, *Islamic historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), I38 ff.

kufir reconcile conflicting accounts of its conquest history. For while the conquest tradition concedes the *sullī ba'd fathī* arrangement,¹⁶² it was too awkward to argue for a *fath ba'd sullī*, since this would cast dishonour on the conquering Muslims: hence *kufir* accounts, which shift responsibility for renewing hostilities back to the conquered.

If there is a kernel of truth in all of this, it is probably that the conquest was violent. That the Islamic tradition says nothing of the killing of local Christians is to be explained not only by its relative indifference to (and absence of solid information about) the fate of the conquered,¹⁶³ but also by the political circumstances in which it stabilized. Clearly defined legal rights and peaceful co-existence, the latter commonly articulated in the Prophetic prohibition of killing monks,¹⁶⁴ are developments of the post-conquest period. Of course a similar thing can once again be said about the Christian tradition: had our Syriac source been written a century later, when the Christian élites had begun to work out a *modus vivendi* with the Muslims, the killing might have been conveniently forgotten as well.

Finally, an account that posits the discovery of an uncorrupted corpse of another (now unidentified) prophet in Tustar is almost certainly bogus.¹⁶⁵ It was probably invoked to support claims made in the course of the *'asabīyāt* that flared up between the Tustaris and Sūsīs about Daniel's *tābūt*.¹⁶⁶ As a source of local pride, as well as a draw for pilgrims, sites such as these were obviously of some value.¹⁶⁷

Tustar II: the organization of traditions

For the purposes of historical reconstruction, we can say with some confidence that reports of a siege led by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, which was then followed by a betrayal from within, reflect early and authentic memories of the events in question. How was this memory transmitted? The question is a notoriously difficult one, but in Tustar we have enough evidence to tease out some provisional answers.

We can start with the collections in which the Tustar accounts were included. The conquest traditions of Khūzistān seem to have been compiled into province-based collections (e.g. al-Madā'inī's¹⁶⁸ and Abū 'Ubayda's¹⁶⁹ *Futūh al-Ahwāz*), as well as into Baṣrān-based collections (e.g. al-Madā'inī's *Khabar al-Baṣra wa-futūhihā*).¹⁷⁰ Detailed descriptions of the first of these seem to be lacking in the literature, but we are fortunate to have a glimpse at the contents of the second. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, it began as follows: 'Dastumaysān, the governorship of al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, the governorship

¹⁶² Al-Tabarī *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2565; cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378.

¹⁶³ For other examples of conquest killing, see Crone and Cook, *Hagurism*, 33.

¹⁶⁴ Thus Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 195: *ash'hāb al-ṣawāmi'*.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31–2.

¹⁶⁶ These are attested for a later period; see al-Muqaddasī (wr. c. 375/985), *Ahsan al-taqāṣīn fī ma'rīfat al-aqālīn*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906; *BGA* 3), 417; also noted by Claude Cahen, 'Mouvements populaires et autonomie urbaine dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen Âge', *Arabica* 6 (1959), 28. The Jews of al-Sūs in Benjamin of Tudela's time are said to have argued about the tomb as well; see Benjamin of Tudela (fl. mid-12th c.), *Itinerary*, ed. and trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1907), 52–3.

¹⁶⁷ In the thirteenth century Tustar could claim the tomb of the sixth Imām of the Shī'a, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765); see al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), *Al-Ishāra ilā ma'rīfat al-ziyāra*, trans. Janine Sourdel-Thomine as *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), 222–3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 103; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 316.

¹⁶⁹ See above, n. 58.

¹⁷⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 103.

of Abū Mūsā, the matter (*khabar*) of al-Ahwāz, of al-Manādhīr, of Nahr Tīrā, of al-Sūs, of Tustar,¹⁷¹ of the citadel (*al-qal'a*), of al-Hurmuzān, of Dabba ibn Miḥṣan,¹⁷² of Jundaysābūr'. Why the material was assembled into this form, in addition to the more conventional *Futūḥ al-Ahwāz* form, can be explained at least in part by the administrative controversy that pitted Baṣrans against Kūfans; for what we really have is a set of traditions recounting the victorious march of Baṣran armies against the remnants of the Sasanian state.

There are, in addition, two very striking features in Ibn al-Nadīm's survey of al-Madā'īnī's work. The first is that the order of titles—here representing 'section headings'—clearly reflects the sequence of events and battles as they are known to us from (most of) the surviving sources: Abū Mūsā follows al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, and his appointment is followed by the conquests of al-Manādhīr, Nahr Tīrā, al-Sūs, and Tustar (Jundaysābūr being misplaced after Tustar).¹⁷³ Given the dearth of second- and early third-century material, it is useful to know that the hard work of establishing a more or less correct sequence was apparently finished by this time.¹⁷⁴

The second striking feature is the detail concerning the conquest of Tustar, particularly al-Hurmuzān's role in it.¹⁷⁵ Now in his attention to al-Hurmuzān, al-Madā'īnī is clearly reflecting broader trends: thus Ibn Abī Shayba has a long section on 'What was related concerning Tustar' (*mā dhikira fī Tustar*), which is dominated by al-Hurmuzān, and the otherwise laconic Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, drawing on sources that include al-Madā'īnī, pauses for four pages of material on *waq'at Tustar*; here too al-Hurmuzān plays the starring role.¹⁷⁶ What makes Ibn al-Nadīm's description of al-Madā'īnī's work especially interesting is his organization of this material into three discrete sections, i.e. *khabar Tustar*, *khabar al-qal'a*, and *khabar al-Hurmuzān*. The *khabar al-qal'a* must refer to a set of traditions concerning the siege of the city in general and al-Hurmuzān's sheltering inside the citadel (*qal'a*, *qaṣaba*) in particular; this is usually, but not always, described as the result of the Muslims' penetration of the city walls. The *khabar al-Hurmuzān*, it follows, would have been a collection of reports relating his surrender and meeting with 'Umar in Medina; a favourite account is a ruse by which al-Hurmuzān secured safe passage.¹⁷⁷ The concerns here are fairly easy to discern: to contrast the pious austerity of 'Umar with the imperious ostentatiousness of al-Hurmuzān—that is, to give vivid illustration to the Arabian God's victory over the polytheist Sasanians.¹⁷⁸ The dominant metaphor seems to be al-Hurmuzān's fine clothing, which is contrasted with 'Umar's spare garb; that the scene is a *topos* is almost certain.¹⁷⁹ This

¹⁷¹ Flügel (*Fihrist*, 103) here read *Dastawā*, which makes enough sense (see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 574); but I follow Dodge (*The Fihrist*, 1, 225) and Tajaddud (*Fihrist*, 115).

¹⁷² See Ibn A'ṭham, *Futūḥ*, II, 28–30; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2710–13.

¹⁷³ The early and indecisive campaigns that go almost entirely unnoticed by our Syriac source were presumably embedded in the section on the governorship of al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba.

¹⁷⁴ Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, who had access to al-Madā'īnī's work on al-Ahwāz (*Ta'rīkh*, I, 140: *qāla Abū I-Ḥasan*), may have had the good judgement to ignore his sequence when it came to Jundaysābūr.

¹⁷⁵ Caetani (*Annali dell'Islam*, III, 908–09) may have been the first to note the crucial role played by al-Hurmuzān in the conquest accounts. The advice given by al-Hurmuzān to 'Umar about the conquest of Isfahān is discussed by Albrecht Noth, 'Isfahān–Nihāwānd. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie', *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 283–4.

¹⁷⁶ Note as well that Sayf's account as preserved by al-Ṭabarī revealingly begins with biographical material on al-Hurmuzān; see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2534.

¹⁷⁷ Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 142; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 381.

¹⁷⁸ Thus al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2557–8; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, V, 64–5: *al-ḥamd li'llāh alladhi adhalla hādhā wa-shi'atahu bi-l-Islām*, etc.

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, al-Yāqūbī, *Historiae*, II, 163. In her article 'al-Hurmuzān' in *EI*², III (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 586b, Laura Veccia Vaglieri concedes that al-Hurmuzān's 'arrival in Medina is described with a number of details that seem to bear a romantic stamp'.

leaves us with the problematic reading of *khabar Tustar*; if it is correct, it probably refers to the campaigning that led up to the siege.

Of course, that al-Madā'īnī organized a mass of Tustarī traditions in this fashion in no way means that they were always so carefully distinguished. This is made plain by a contemporary, Ibn Abī Shayba, a *mīhādīth* who does us the favour of citing relatively full *isnāds*, and who also eschews the *akhbārīs'* practice of breaking up and rearranging *akhbār*. His first account of the battle of Tustar and its aftermath was transmitted from Qurād Abū Nūh ('Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ghazwān, d. 207/822),¹⁸⁰ and is ultimately credited to 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakra (d. c. 100/718).¹⁸¹ The account seems to reflect a fairly naive stage of tradition building. It takes the reader through the siege, surrender, and al-Hurmuzān's meeting with 'Umar; and for all that it presents an edifying story, organized primarily around the dialogue, it is disarmingly vague: we have but a handful of characters, and no attempt to locate the events chronologically. It may reasonably be taken to represent one late first- or early second-century Başran tale of the conquest. Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt had access to the same account, which he too credits to Qurād Abū Nūh, now via an intermediary, 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh.¹⁸² Whereas Ibn Abī Shayba probably preserved this account *in extenso*, Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, here wearing an *akhbārī*'s hat, gives us a highly abbreviated version. It too enjoys pride of place in Khalīfa's presentation, but now the account is stripped of all but its essentials, and breaks off when al-Hormuzān takes refuge in his citadel. The tradition has apparently begun to fragment, in this case according to the categories reflected in al-Madā'īnī's work.¹⁸³

Conclusion

One can only agree with Conrad that 'work that securely vindicates, rather than repudiates, the historicity of early Arabic accounts is extremely difficult'.¹⁸⁴ As I have tried to show, our Syriac passage can be handled in such a way so as to vindicate *and* repudiate. Since much of the preceding has also been fairly rough going, I shall conclude by restating more concisely, and briefly elaborating upon, my principal conclusions.

1. A local seventh-century Syriac source, which is historiographically independent of the Islamic tradition, can offer impressive corroboration for accounts preserved in a range of Arabic-Islamic sources, which generally date from the ninth and tenth centuries. Since the corroboration is occasionally detailed and precise, in this case there can be no doubt that the nascent historical tradition

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¹⁸⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, VII.2, 77; Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449), *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-nizāmiyya, AH 1325-27), VI, 247-9; al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Ārnā'ūt et al. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1401-04/1981-84), IX, 518-19; al-Safadī (d. 764/1362), *Al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Helmut Ritter, Sven Dederling et al. (Istanbul and Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1931-proceeding), XVIII, 217.

¹⁸¹ See al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥi*, 347; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, VII.1, 138; Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukkāsha (Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1960), 289; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, VI, 366; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, VI, 148-9; al-Safadī, *Wāfi*, XVIII, 128; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, IV, 319-20; Ibn al-'Imād (d. 1089/1679), *Shadharāt al-dhuhab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husnī al-Jazā'iřī (Cairo: Maktabat al-qudsī, AH 1350), I, 122. Al-Wāqidī also drew on 'Abd al-Rahmān for information about al-Baṣra; see al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2530.

¹⁸² Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 139-40.

¹⁸³ Note the narrative interruption (*gāla*) that may mark the division between *khabar al-qal'a* and *khabar al-Hurmuzān* material in Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 29-4.

¹⁸⁴ Conrad, 'Arwād', 399 n. 213.

was in some measure continuous. The results here thus contrast sharply with another recent comparison of Arabic and Syriac sources, where it was shown that the former retain only the vaguest outlines of the conquest of Arwād, a small island off the coast of Syria. Herc radical discontinuity was the lesson learned.¹⁸⁵

Part of the explanation for the contrast may lie in the relative strengths of the Syrian and Iraqi historical traditions. For although Syria did produce more historiography than has generally been assumed, it cannot compare with that of Iraq; and what was produced in Syria was frequently slighted by later Iraqi authorities in favour of Iraqi traditions.¹⁸⁶ But since the invention of tradition was apparently not limited to Syria,¹⁸⁷ and furthermore, since the survival of some authentic material from Syria was occasionally possible as well,¹⁸⁸ this explanation cannot take us terribly far. It is thus probably more fruitful to draw a slightly different contrast. Left in the hands of the Iraqis, for whom the fate of the Mediterranean island of Arwād could hardly have constituted a serious concern, such conquest tradition as there was disintegrated almost entirely.¹⁸⁹ By contrast, we have seen that the conquest of Khūzistān in general, and Tustar in particular, mattered a great deal to the neighbouring Baṣrāns and Kūfāns;¹⁹⁰ indeed, were it not for the Kūfan/Baṣran debates, much more material might have been lost. It may seem trite to point out that history that matters is more readily transmitted than history that does not; but in this case it bears repeating. If we assume that the tradition remained oral beyond the lifetime of the participants, as we must,¹⁹¹ the continuing interests of the Baṣrāns and Kūfāns in the conquest fate of cities to the south provide the best explanation for the survival of material in oral form. There is no general life expectancy for oral traditions.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, particularly 388: ‘...the fact remains that it can be demonstrated in every case that the Arab-Islamic material for the conquest of Arwād does not and cannot consist of accounts passed on from one generation to the next in a continuous tradition beginning with the generation of the Arab conquerors. Instead, the beginnings of the extant tradition for this event must be sought among Umayyad storytellers piecing together narratives with only the barest shreds of genuinely historical information to guide or restrain the process of reconstruction’.

¹⁸⁶ See Fred M. Donner, ‘The problem of early Arabic historiography in Syria’, in Muhammad ‘Adnān al-Bakhīt, ed., *Proceedings of the second symposium on the history of Bilād al-Shām during the early Islamic period up to 40 A.H./640 A.D.* (Amman: University of Jordan, 1987), I, 1–27. On a Damascene tradition, see Gerhard Conrad, *Abū'l-Husain al-Rāzī (-347/958) und seine Schriften. Untersuchungen zur frühen Damaszener Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991). See now J. Lindsay, ed., *Ibn 'Asākir and early Islamic history* (Princeton: Darwin Press), 2001.

¹⁸⁷ See Noth, ‘Iṣfahān-Nihāwand’; Donner, *Conquests*, 198–9 (on Buwayb); and now Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*.

¹⁸⁸ See Donner, *Conquests*, 144 (al-Waqīdī apparently corroborated by the Syriac tradition; there is no evidence that the latter depended on the Islamic).

¹⁸⁹ Note that it is the Syriac tradition, in the person of Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785), that quite naturally transmits a more believable version of events.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Lecker’s comments à propos of Abū 'Ubayda (‘Biographical notes’, 17): ‘...the conquests of the Sawād and ‘the’ neighboring Ahwāz were a kind of local history for the Baṣrān A.U.’.

¹⁹¹ The case that the early tradition was written down earlier is occasionally asserted (see, most recently, Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought*, 14, 26–7), but it has not been demonstrated. Much as one would like to see early Islamic scripturalism function as a catalyst for historical writing (cf. the role of Christianity in the shift from roll to codex), we lack the evidence to see this at work. For two recent views on the problem of the origins of Islamic historiography, see F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998) and Robinson, *Islamic historiography*.

¹⁹² On the social function of oral history, see John Kenyon Davies, ‘The reliability of oral tradition’, in L. Foxhall and J. K. Davies, eds, *The Trojan War: its historicity and context* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1984), 90; O. Murray, ‘Herodotus and oral history’, in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt, eds, *Achaemenid history, II: the Greek sources* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987), 99.

Of course, if the transmission of historical memory was not completely discontinuous, it was anything but disinterested. It is abundantly clear that much of the material was conditioned, and in some cases generated, by post-conquest polemics about spoils and administration. Even a tradition that at first glance suggests only simple storytelling of the *awā'il* variety, e.g. ‘the first to light the fire at the gate of Tustar’,¹⁹³ is adduced by Abū Yūsuf in his discussion of the division of spoils.¹⁹⁴ One can disagree with Dennett’s qualifications of Becker, or Noth’s qualifications of Dennett, but there is no denying the insight that draws together all their work, and which Calder has emphasized: conquest accounts ‘should be recognized as bearers of ideological and juristic messages’.¹⁹⁵ To take only one example: if one’s share of the booty was determined in part by whether one was walking rather than riding, and if the latter, on what kind of mount,¹⁹⁶ how are we to describe how such-and-such a city was taken?

What our Syriac source shows, however—and this needs to be emphasized—is that the Khūzistān tradition is more than the accumulation of details arbitrarily added by storytellers, more than *topoi* and *schemata*, and finally more than back-projected legal precedents or assertions of state and provincial power. All of these do appear, crowding, and no doubt occasionally crowding out, authentic material. But some authentic material *did* survive, and since some of this at first appears to be manifestly stereotypical, the task of distinguishing between authentic and unauthentic is no simple matter. The conquest of Tustar shows many of the signs that usually betray literary effect, e.g. statements describing the enemy’s strength,¹⁹⁷ a great siege, tribal boasting, and eschatological allusions, but for all these it cannot be dismissed as merely topological.

2. The survival of authentic material is most striking at the level of individual scenes (e.g. the siege/betrayal at Tustar; Daniel’s tomb at al-Sūs), although it is certainly true that legendary elements can arise here too (e.g. the traitor’s name at Tustar). The results thus support Noth’s view that the conquest traditions as we have them are generally composite reconstructions, assembled out of discrete units, rather than pieces of a now-lost coherent whole.¹⁹⁸

This said, our Syriac source can also corroborate the Islamic tradition on matters that are not ‘scene-specific’, but rather represent a more synthetic understanding of events, e.g. the principal role played by Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī in the protracted campaigns, and matters of sequence as well, particularly the secondary capitulations of al-Sūs and Tustar. This, in turn, suggests that at least some accounts concerning Tustar and al-Sūs were integrated early on into a fairly broad view of the Khūzistān campaign, that the collectors and systematizers of the second and third centuries had the historiographical resources and sophistication to overcome the limitations of source material that did not, or some combination of both. It is the nature of our evidence—and the state of research—that we cannot say much more than this. One can

¹⁹³ See above, n. 148.

¹⁹⁴ Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 198.

¹⁹⁵ Norman Calder, *Studies in early Muslim jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 151.

¹⁹⁶ Al-Tabarī, *Tarīkh*, 1, 2556; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 18; ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 183–7; Qudāma ibn Ja‘far (d. c. 310/922), *Kitāb al-kharāj*, ed. Husayn Mu’nis (Cairo: Dār al-shurūq, 1987), 59.

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 380: *wa-bihā shawkat al-‘adīw wa-hadduhum*.

¹⁹⁸ Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 5. On *akhbār* more generally, see Stefan Leder, ‘The literary use of the *khabar*: a basic form of historical writing’, in Cameron and Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, I, 277–315.

speculate that the memory of Abū Mūsā was kept alive by descendants in al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa;¹⁹⁹ and we have also seen that the correct sequence of battles was already in place by the early third century. But these are just two pieces of a much larger puzzle.

3. The case of Khūzistān offers yet another illustration of how the ‘schools theory’ of the early tradition fails us.²⁰⁰ If Ibn A‘tham more frequently seems to have got things right, no single authority either resisted the forces of distortion completely, or monopolized early material entirely. In some cases the consensus of the Islamic tradition was vindicated; in others (e.g. the conquest of Jundaysābūr), minority views were corroborated. Sayf ibn ‘Umar seems to have been mistaken about the role of Abū Sabra at Tustar;²⁰¹ on the other hand, he seems to have been the only authority who had reasonably good material on the truce(s) between al-Hurmuzān and the campaigning Muslims. Indeed Sayf’s account, which describes the tribute arrangements between al-Hurmuzān and the Muslims in an impressively imprecise way, passes Noth’s standards for authenticity with flying colours.²⁰² The absence of detailed tribute accounts is an altogether striking characteristic of the Khūzistānī conquest accounts in general, and this too seems to be the case for all of our traditionists, regardless of their provenance.

4. As far as the reconstruction of conquest history is concerned, we can have some confidence that Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī, then based in al-Baṣra, led a Muslim force that followed up earlier battles in Khūzistān: the capitulations of al-Sīs and’ Tustar, which we can actually describe in some detail, marked the turning point in his campaign. That the Sasanian defence and Muslim advance concentrated on these cities can be explained by their administrative significance in the late Sasanian period.²⁰³ At least one truce was brokered, and as others preserved in very early sources,²⁰⁴ it was apparently negotiated by commanders on the scene; it stipulated the payment of tribute and described a frontier. Our source cannot corroborate the Islamic tradition in dating matters, but it gives no reason to doubt that Tustar had fallen by 22 or 23 AH.

¹⁹⁹ See Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064), *Jamharat ansāb al-‘arab*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-ma‘rif, 1977), 397–8; Ibn Sa‘d, *Tabaqāt*, VI, 9. The significance of family and clan traditions is emphasized by Michael Lecker, ‘The death of the Prophet Muhammad’s father: did Wāqidī invent some of the evidence?’, *ZDMG* 145 (1995), 11. On family traditions in a different oral tradition, see Rosalind Thomas, *Oral tradition and written record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), chapter 2.

²⁰⁰ The argument for distinct historiographical schools was undercut by Albrecht Noth long ago; see his ‘Der Charakter der ersten grossen Sammlungen von Nachrichten zur frühen Kalifenseite’, *Der Islam* 47 (1971), 168–99.

²⁰¹ Cf. the case of Abū ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ (Albrecht Noth, ‘*Futūh*-history and *Futūh*-historiography’, *Al-Qantara* 10 [1989], 459), who seems to appear in Damascus conquest accounts only to function within the manifestly late *sulṭanī/aṣra* paradigm.

²⁰² ‘Je weniger eine Abgabe Steuercharakter hat, umso eher kann sie als authentisch angesehen werden; je mehr sie einer Steuer ähnelt, umso mehr ist ihre Authentizität zu bezweifeln.’ See Albrecht Noth, ‘Die literarisch überlieferten Verträge der Eroberungszeit als historische Quellen für die Behandlung der unterworfenen Nicht-Muslime durch ihre neuen muslimischen Oberherren’, in Tilman Nagel et al., eds, *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islām*, I (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1973), 300. For a balanced view of Sayf, see Ella Landau-Tasseron, ‘Sayf ibn ‘Umar in medieval and modern scholarship’, *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 1–26.

²⁰³ See Rika Gyselen, *La géographie administrative de l’empire sassanide: les témoignages sigillographiques* (Paris: Groupe pour l’étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1989), *passim*; J. Markwart, *A catalogue of the provincial capitals of Ērānshahr* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1931), 19.

²⁰⁴ See ps.-Sebēos, *Histoire d’Héraclius*, 147, 164.

Appendix

Immediately following upon the passages I have translated above is an account alluding to the conquest of Syria and Egypt, and for the benefit of those interested, the following is a translation.²⁰⁵

Afterwards (*bātarkēn*) a man from the Arabs named Kāled came and went to the West, and took the lands and towns as far as 'Arab.²⁰⁶ Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, heard [this] and sent a large army against them, whose leader was called S-q-y-l-r-ā.²⁰⁷ The Arabs defeated them, annihilating more than 100,000 Byzantines, whose commander they [also] killed. They also killed Ishō'dād, the bishop of Hīrtā, who was there with 'Abdmasīh;²⁰⁸ this [Ishō'dād] was undertaking an embassy between the Arabs and Byzantines. The Arabs [thus] took control of all the lands of Syria and Palestine. They wanted to enter the Egyptian [lands] as well, but they were unable, because the border (*thōmā*) was guarded by the Patriarch of Alexandria with a strong and large army. For he had blocked the marches of the land,²⁰⁹ and had built walls along the banks of the Nile in all the land. Only with difficulty, because of their (i.e. the walls') height,²¹⁰ were the Arabs able to enter and take the land of Egypt, Thebaid, and Africa.

If only because of a possible allusion to the enigmatic al-Muqawqis, this passage deserves some attention.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ The passage begins on 37: 15/31: 3 and ends on 38: 3/31: 20.

²⁰⁶ Often glossed as western northern Mesopotamia under Byzantine rule; see Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 14 n. 4; *Synodicon orientale, ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1902; Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, 37), 617.

²⁰⁷ 37: 19, which is to be compared with Nöldeke's and Brock's reconstruction of S[ac]ellarijus] in what is called the 'record dated to AD 637' in Palmer, *Seventh century*, 3; and Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Karl de Boor (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883–85), AM 6125: *sakellarios*; trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes confessor* (Oxford, 1997), 468f. For discussion see Donner, *Conquests*, 145–6; Walter Kaegi, *Byzantium and the early Islamic conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 99–100.

²⁰⁸ The presence of Ishō'dād in Syria is curious, and it may be that this sentence is out of place; Fiey ('L'Élam...suite,' 137), seems to put this episode of killing in Tustar. In 'Abdmasīh we almost certainly have 'Abd al-Masīh ibn 'Amr/'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Masīh, an Azdī native of al-Hīra, who is well attested in the Islamic tradition: see al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 243; and Donner, *Conquests*, 183, 331 n. 83, for more literature.

²⁰⁹ Literally: 'the entrances and exits'.

²¹⁰ Cf. the accounts beginning at 30: 25/26: 15. Walls were generally seen as an effective defence against Arabs (in contrast to seige-laying imperial armies); see Procopius (wr. 550), *The history of the wars*, ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961 reprint), II.xiv.12; and 'Joshua the Stylite', *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, 63/54.

²¹¹ The testimony of the *Khūzistān chronicle* is noted in the revised edition of Butler (Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt*, ed. P. M. Fraser, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], ix), but it did not make it into the text proper. On al-Muqawqis, see K. Öhrnberg, art. 'al-Mukawqis' in *EI²*, VII (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 511a–513a; and Butler, *Conquest*, Appendix C; on the Great Wall of Egypt, see Butler, *Conquest*, 197–8; and on the walls and fortifications in general, Wladislaw Kubtiak, *Al-Fustat: its foundation and early urban development* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1987), 50–57.